

**MINUTES - DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 7 MARCH, 2023 AT 8.00 PM  
IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Present:** Cllrs G Newton - Chairman; R Cheesman; A-M Butler; K Alden- Morris;  
J. Cottis; B. Cottis; J Tournay; Mrs T. Irving – Clerk/RFO; 5 Members of the Public.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllr Alex Pallant – work commitment.  
The above reason for absence was noted and accepted.
2. **NOTIFICATION OF WHETHER ANYONE WISHES TO RECORD ANY ITEMS:** The Clerk for the purpose of minuting.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** Cllr Butler Item 20 – Discussion following correspondence relating to traffic lights on Willington Street.
4. **ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** No questions were raised during this session.
5. **APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF 07.02.22:** The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Newton.
6. **CRIME REPORT:** Crime reports issued on e-watch.co.uk.

**Longham Copse.** On Saturday 18 February around 01.14. Somebody tried to break into a residential property.

**Longham Copse.** On Saturday 18 February around 01.40. Somebody tried to break into a residential property.

In addition to the above, further incidents are known to have taken place: vandalism at a bus stop on Deringwood Drive and a dog bit someone, taking 'the tops off two fingers'.

A further incident was reported to the Clerk by email, just prior to the meeting:

*'At about 3.30 pm at mallards pond, I had a few words with 3 lads who had catapults and were firing at the wildlife on the pond. When I challenged them, they threatened to shoot me and my daughter.'*

Cllr Newton will be contacting the Kent Police Commissioner, Matthew Scott, to discuss concerns and ask for a greater police presence in the parish.

CCTV to be discussed at the next meeting.

7. **REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:**
  - 7.1 **COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Not received.
  - 7.2 **BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:**

- Cllr Newton has involved MBC's Waste Crime Officer in an attempt to keep the area in the vicinity of The Spires Shops clear of litter.
- The takeaway outlets have been informed that they have a responsibility to clear away waste that has been dropped in the evening.

**7.3 REPORT FROM DCA REPRESENTATIVE:** Race night to be held at the Centre on 11 March.

## 8 FINANCE:

### 8.1. Approve Statement of Account

#### Items for payment:

Folly Wildlife Trust	Donation	50.00
R. Cheesman	Expenses – Downswood Diggers	51.99
Katherine Tye	Rock Choir Expenses	50.00
SLCC	Clerk's Membership (2/3 Contribution)	148.00
Staffing Costs	Payroll & Expenses	2,005.09

#### Cheques received:

Caxtons	Litter Picking Contribution	525.00
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**Balance of Current Account: £22,684.50 credit, after all cheques sent**

**Balance of Investment Account: £10,615.31 credit**

Acceptance of the previously agreed circulated financial report was proposed by Cllr J. Cottis, seconded by Cllr B. Cottis and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED**

**The following item (8.2) to be held in closed session.**

### 8.2 Litter Picker – Review of sick pay for February \*

\*It was agreed to move the above item & item 10 to the end of the meeting for the closed session.

**8.3 Other Matters to Report:** It was agreed to review electronic banking at the next meeting.

## 9 PLANNING: New Applications and Existing applications Update:

### New Applications

#### 23/500557 – The Nature Reserve Spot Lane.

TPO Application to remove lower limb from One Ash Tree (T1) above footpath and clean out crown. To re-coppice Hazel Tree (T2 re-coppice as the tree hangs over footpath and has failing sections.

Awaiting Decision

#### 23/500960 FULL – 31 Pennine Way.

Erection of a single storey rear and side extension, including conversion of garage to habitable space and alternations to fenestration.

Awaiting Decision.

### Applications Granted

22/505482/FULL - 29 Horton Downs

22/505941/FULL 8 Frithwood Close

**Maidstone Borough Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document Consultation & Call for Sites.**

Only representations received from 28 Feb 2023 to 17 April 2023 will be considered.

An email from Southern Water was read out to the meeting.

This was in response to concerns raised by a local resident that 'the sewers on Downswood would be insufficient to take the sewage from 400+ homes from the Bellway development'

**GOVERNANCE & POLICY REVIEW:** Item to be held in closed session at the end of the meeting.

- 10 TRAFFIC RELATED ISSUES/HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT PLAN:** KHS to confirm a revised date for the survey cables.

Concerns were expressed about the number of potholes. It was confirmed that many have already been marked up for repair. All are encouraged to report new pot holes to KHS for inspection/repair.

**11 CLERK'S REPORT: To receive reports & updates on previous actions:**

- Following a report to the Clerk by a resident that Deringwood Drive was dirty and needed cleaning, Bellway Homes arranged for it be swept. A request was made that the sweeper visits on a regular basis.
- Due to budget constraints, the damaged verge on Bournemouth Close will not be repaired by Highways at the moment (only safety critical defects are currently being actioned). Levelling out and seeding will likely be carried out as routine maintenance work by the Soft Landscape Team.

- 13 OPEN SPACES/DOWNSWOOD DIGGERS UPDATE:** Further planting has taken place using plants that are appropriate for the Nature Reserve woodland setting. It was suggested that the non-woodland plants are allowed to flower this year and then ask that they are removed. Bat boxes still require fitting.

It was suggested that Monday, 8 May (Bank Holiday) will be an ideal date for Downswood Diggers to meet and invite members of the public to join in.

- 14 CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III:** It was agreed to use the £500 previously donated by Cllr Newton's Borough Grant to provide fruit trees & a plaque. Trees to be planted on the grass verge by the Downswood Stone/hollies. **RESOLVED** subject to agreement by MBC.

Cllr Cheesman has had initial talks with a local fruit grower who's offered advice with the project.

- 15 ANNUAL REVIEW OF RISK ASSESSMENT:** Following a review by the council, it was agreed that no updates are currently required.

**16 OLYMPICNIC – Saturday, 15 July:**

Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation from Four Jays in the sum of £248.75 + VAT for the provision of portable toilets and a fire extinguisher.

Charles Tanswell has kindly agreed to MC the event and has forwarded suggestions for consideration.

**17 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:**

- SLCC – Clerk online seminar re Elections.
- Cllr Newton and the Clerk attended a meeting with Caxtons to discuss litter in and around The Spires Shops/not all of the bins not being emptied on a regular basis  
Cllr Newton has spoken with the Borough and they confirmed that Biffa will not take refuse if it is not correctly packaged.  
Caxtons confirmed they will be taking appropriate action to deal with the issues.

- 18 GARDEN COMPETITION – Including suggestions for a judge:** A shortlist of gardens to be prepared by councillors in May and submitted to the Clerk prior to June's meeting. Cllr Cheesman has spoken with the Manager of Millbrook Garden Centre who's indicated that he would be amenable to judge the competition.  
Prizes to be the same as last year: 1<sup>st</sup> x £50 – Best Overall Garden, 2<sup>nd</sup> x £25 – Best garden/hanging basket(s)/pots or boxes & 3<sup>rd</sup> x £10 best use of small space/basket(s) etc.

- 19 DCA FETE – Saturday, 15 July:** DPC hopes to be able to have a stall this year. Further discussion to take place at April's meeting when a budget will be agreed.

**20 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED:**

- Email received suggesting that a trial should take place before traffic lights are permanently installed at the Willington Street/Deringwood Drive junction. Interest declared – See Item 3.  
The Planning Inspector was guided by the information provided by KHS and a traffic management company when making his decision.  
Whilst it is understood that the Inspector's decision is final, subsequent to the meeting, Cllr Newton stated that he will approach Helen Whately for help/advice.
- An email from Southern Water was read out to the meeting.  
This was in response to concerns raised by a local resident that 'the sewers on Downswood would be insufficient to take the sewage from 400+ homes from the Bellway development'.

**21 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS:** CCTV, DCA Fete

**The following items were held in closed session.**

- 8.2 Litter Picker – Review of sick pay for February '23.** Following discussion, full payment was **RESOLVED** for February's absence. (This is in line with terms in the draft contract.)

**10. GOVERNANCE & POLICIES REVIEW: Draft Contract for Litter Picker.** The previously circulated draft contract and job description were **RESOLVED** for use and will provide a standard template going forward.

Cllr Butler and the Clerk were thanked for their work on these documents.

Please contact the Clerk if you have items that you wish to be considered for future agendas.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.55 pm.

The next meeting of the Council will be held at 8pm on **Tuesday, 4 April 2023** (This meeting will be preceded by the Downswood Annual Parish Meeting at 7.45 pm).